

## Activities of Daily Living<sup>1</sup>

### Purpose

To assist in determining whether homemaker or personal care services are being provided to clients in their own home.

### Introduction

Measurements of functional status, such as the activities of daily living and the instrumental activities of daily living, are commonly used across the country as the basis for differentiating among the levels of long-term care services. Functional status is the degree of independence with performing those tasks needed to live independently.

Activities of daily living or ADLs indicate the client's ability to perform the daily personal care tasks of bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring, eating/feeding, and bladder or continence control.

There are three criteria to assessing functional status. The client's:

1. Impairment level and need for personal assistance;
2. Abilities;<sup>2</sup> and
3. Usual performance of an activity over the previous two weeks.

There are several components to each functional activity, with the assessment based on the client's ability to perform *all* of the components. If a client is mentally and physically free of impairment, there is no safety risk to the individual, and the client chooses not to complete an activity due to personal preference or choice, then that individual does not need assistance.

A need for assistance exists when the client is unable to complete an activity due to cognitive impairment, functional disability, physical health problems, or safety. An unsafe situation exists when there is a negative consequence from not having help, or there is the potential of negative consequence occurring without additional help. Within the human assistance category, the client may need verbal prompting or cuing from another to safely perform the entire activity, or may need hands-on assistance including set-up of the activity.

---

<sup>1</sup> The material in this guideline was obtained from the "Virginia Uniform Assessment Instrument (UAI), 1998 edition.

<sup>2</sup> The client should be assessed on his ability to do particular activities, even if he does not usually do the activity. Lack of capacity should be distinguished from lack of motivation, opportunity, choice, or for the convenience of a caregiver.

Center for Quality Health Care Services and Consumer Protection

---

An individual's degree of independence in performing these activities is part of determining the appropriate level of care and services. The level of care and services provided determines whether a provider of those services must be licensed as required by state law.

**Definitions**

"Homemaker services" means assistance to persons with the inability to perform one or more instrumental activities of daily living. Homemaker services may also include assistance with bathing areas the client cannot reach, fastening client's clothing, combing hair, brushing dentures, shaving with an electric razor, and providing stabilization to a client while walking. *Homemaker services do not include feeding, bed baths, transferring, lifting, putting on braces or other supports, and cutting nails or shaving with a blade.* Providers of homemaker services are not required to be licensed.

"Personal care services" means the provision of nonskilled services including assistance in the activities of daily living, and may include instrumental activities of daily living, related to the needs of the client, who has or is at risk of an illness, injury or disabling condition. Providers of personal care services are required to be licensed to provide services.

**General Information**

Bathing

Bathing includes getting in and out of the tub, preparing the bath (e.g., turning on the water), actually washing oneself, and toweling dry. The client's functional level is based on the client's need for assistance *most or all of the time* to bathe the entire body.

Clients may report various methods of bathing that constitute their usual pattern. For example, they may take a sink or sponge bath five day a week, but take a tub bath two days a week when assisted.

Clients who only need help to wash their backs or feet are not receiving personal care.

Dressing

Dressing includes getting clothes from closets or drawers, putting them on, fastening and taking them off. Clothing refers to clothes, braces and artificial limbs worn daily. A client who wears pajamas or a gown with robe and slippers as their usual attire are considered dressed.

Clients who usually complete the dressing process without assistance from others, or who need only minimal assistance to complete the dressing process, such as tying shoes or zipping up a dress, are not receiving personal care.

Center for Quality Health Care Services and Consumer Protection

---

Clients who require assistance most or all of the time from another person to obtain clothing from closets or drawers, fastening hooks, putting on clothes or artificial limbs, or who are completely dressed by another individual and do not take part in the activity at all, are receiving personal care services.

Toileting

Toileting is the ability to get to and from the bathroom, get on and off the toilet, clean oneself, manages clothing and flushing the toilet. A commode at any site is considered a “bathroom,” when, in addition to the toileting tasks, the client empties, cleanses, and replaces the commode, such as a urinal or Johnny pot, without assistance from others.

Clients who use the bathroom, clean themselves after, and arranges clothes without help, or who use handrails, walkers, or canes for support to complete the toileting task, or who use the bathroom without help during the day, and use a bedpan, urinal, or bedside commode without help during the night and can empty this receptacle without assistance, are not receiving personal care services.

Clients who, most or all of the time, require assistance from another person for help getting to/from the bathroom, adjusting clothing, transferring on and off the toilet, or cleansing after elimination are receiving personal care services. A client who uses the bathroom, but is totally dependent on another for assistance or does not participate in the activity at all is receiving personal care services.

Transferring and ambulation

Transferring is the ability to move from a bed, chair, or wheelchair.

Ambulation is the ability to get around indoors (walking) and outdoors (mobility), to climb stairs and wheel.

*Walking* means moving about indoors on foot or artificial limbs.

*Wheeling* means moving about by a wheelchair. The wheelchair itself is not considered a mechanical device.

*Stair climbing* means climbing up or down a flight of stairs from one floor to another.

*Mobility* means the extent of a client’s movement outside his usual living quarters, including the client’s ability to walk steadily and endurance level.

Clients, who usually transfer or ambulate without assistance, or with the aid of a mechanical device such as a walker, a cane, or handrails or with stabilizing support of another person, are not receiving personal care services.

Clients who, most or all of the time, require assistance from another person who lifts some of the client’s body weight and provides physical support in order for the client to safely transfer or

Center for Quality Health Care Services and Consumer Protection

---

ambulate are receiving personal care services. A client usually lifted out of a bed or chair by another person and who does not participate in the transferring process is receiving personal care services. A client who is transferred with a mechanical lift or Hoyer lift is included in this category. Clients who are confined to a bed or chair are receiving personal care services.

Eating/feeding

Eating/feeding is the process of getting food/fluid by any means into the body after it is placed in front of the client. This includes cutting food, opening a carton and pouring liquids, holding a glass to drink, and transferring food from a plate or bowl into the client's mouth. Eating/feeding is not the process of preparing foods for cooking, cooking the foods, plating the food for a client, or verbally prompting a client to initiate or complete the eating process.

Clients able to perform all the activities without the assistance of others, or who need mechanical devices, such as adapted utensils or non-skid plates in order to complete the eating process are not receiving personal care services.

Clients who need assistance to bring food to their mouth, or who are spoon-fed, fed by syringe or tube, or who are fed intravenously (IV) are receiving personal care services.

*Spoon-fed* means a client does not bring any food to his mouth and is fed completely by others.

*Fed by syringe or tube* means the client usually is fed a prescribed diet via a feeding syringe, NG-tube or G-tube.

*Fed by IV* means the client is usually fed a prescribed sterile solution intravenously.

Continence

Continence is the ability to control urination (bladder) and elimination (bowel). Incontinence may have one or several different causes, including specific disease processes and side effects of medications.

Clients who can voluntarily control their bladder or bowel are not receiving personal care services. A client who uses an ostomy bag or other elimination device, whether internal or external, and who can completely care for that device, or a client using pads or adult diapers and who correctly disposes of them, or who performs the Credé's method is not receiving personal care services.

Clients on a bowel or bladder stimulation regimen or who are on dialysis are receiving skilled care, i.e., medical/nursing services. A client who uses an ostomy bag, or other device whether internal or external and requires assistance from another person to care for the ostomy, such as stoma and skin cleaning, dressing, application of appliance or irrigations is receiving personal care services. A client who use pads or adult diapers and who cannot correctly dispose of them are receiving personal care services.